

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 0697

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SNAR, PINT, CO
SUBJECT: NARCOTICS INTERDICTION

1. SUMMARY. AMBASSADOR PAID COURTESY CALL ON NEW MINISTER OF JUSTICE DR. CESAR GOMEZ ESTRADA TODAY. AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED CONTINUED VOLUME OF COCAINE AND MARIJUANA PROCESSING AND TRAFFICKING AND STRESSED US WILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE SUPPORT FOR COLOMBIAN INITIATIVES IN THE VARIOUS FACETS OF DRUG INTERDICTION. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING THE CALL THE AMBASSADOR MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:
A) COLOMBIA CONTINUES TO BE THE PROCESSING AND TRANSSHIPMENT POINT FOR SOME 70 PERCENT OF THE WORLD'S SUPPLY OF ILLEGAL COCAINE, AS WELL AS THE SOURCE OF SIGNIFICANT AMOUNTS OF MARIJUANA. RECENT LARGE SEIZURES OF COLOMBIAN COCAINE AND MARIJUANA IN THE UNITED STATES AND ELSEWHERE INDICATE THAT TRAFFICKING IN THESE

SUBSTANCES IS NOT BEING SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCED. ON THE CONTRARY, TRAFFICKING IN BOTH SUBSTANCES MAY BE GROWING.

B) BOTH COCAINE AND MARIJUANA TRAFFICKING IN COLOMBIA ARE--ACCORDING TO INFORMATION DEVELOPED BY US AND COLOMBIAN POLICE--DOMINATED BY LARGE, INDIGENOUS, MAFIA-LIKE CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS, WHICH ARE ALSO ENGAGED IN GENERAL SMUGGLING AND OTHER CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES. THESE
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CRIMINAL GROUPS HAVE EXCELLENT AND STRONG RELATIONS WITH SMILILAR ORGANIZATIONS IN LATIN AMERICA, NORTH AMERICA, AND EUROPE. THEIR MINIMUM PROFITS FROM ILLEGAL COCAINE TRAFFICKING ALONE ARE ESTIMATED AT MORE THAN US \$250 MILLION PER YEAR.

C) BECAUSE DRUG TRAFFICKING AND ABUSE ARE MAJOR INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS IMPACTING ON THE UNITED STATES, AS WELL

AS COLOMBIA, OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS HAVE WORKED CLOSELY FOR OVER FOUR YEARS TO COMBAT THESE THREATS. MOST RECENTLY, THE UNITED STATES HAS INCREASED ITS BILATERAL GRANT AID FOR NARCOTICS CONTROL TO A TOTAL OF OVER SIX MILLION DOLLARS IN AN EFFORT TO GIVE COLOMBIA THE TOOLS IT REQUESTED TO EFFECTVELY COMBAT WELL-ORGANIZED AND ENTRENCHED LOCAL TRAFFICKING RINGS. COLOMBIA HAS PROMISED TO VIRTUALLY DOUBLE THE POLICE MANPOWER DEVOTED TO NARCOTICS INTERDICTION.

D) WE REALIZE THAT MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF MONEY AND EQUIPMENT FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT WILL NOT, IN THEMSELVES, LEAD TO MORE EFFECTIVE NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING CONTROL. MORE IMPORTANT IN NARCOTICS INTERDICTION, FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, ARE SKILLED AND DEDICATED DETECTIVES, GOOD INTELLIGNECE, WELL-PREPARED CRIMINAL PROSECTUIONS AND A STRONG JUDICIAL SYSTEM DEDICATED TO PUTTING MAJOR NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING FIGURES BEHIND BARS.

3. DR. GOMEZ THANKED US FOR OUR CANDOR AND ADDED THAT HE PARTICULARLY APPRECIATED THE EXTENT OF MY PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT. HE SAID HE PLANNED TO DO THE SAME BUT ADDED THAT HIS BIGGEST HEADACHE WAS THE INCREDIBLE AMOUNT OF CORRUPTION INVOLVED, BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OF THE BUREAUCRACY. HE SAID THAT MUCH OF HIS TIME IS SPENT SIFTING "LEADS," RUMORS AND ACCUSATIONS. AT THE END OF THE CONVERSATION WE AGREED TO TRY TO MEET PERIODICALLY ON A PERSONAL, INFORMAL BASIS TO SHARE INFORMATION, TO COMPARE PROBLEMS, OR EVEN TO JUST PLAIN COMMISERATE.

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